

Mount Hope Baptist Church Site and Cemetery

1865-1941

CH-776

Nanjemoy, vic.

Public

Mount Hope Baptist Church is the site of the oldest Baptist African American congregation in Charles County. Established in 1867 by Rev. A. A. Watts, it was the founding church for three other African American Baptist communities including Oak Grove in Nanjemoy/Grayton (1883), Pleasant Grove in Marbury/Chicamuxen (1907), and Little Zion in Hilltop (1880), all located in western Charles County. The site includes a 1941 chapel, a cemetery established in the late 19th century, and an early 20th century schoolhouse. Together they reflect the emergence of African American communities after the Civil War and the importance of religion and education in that evolution. Although unconfirmed, the site may include one of the few remaining examples of Rosenwald Schools to survive in Charles County.

Maryland Historical Trust

Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. CH-776

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic Mount Hope Baptist Church

other Marshope

2. Location

street and number 8705 Gilroy Road not for publication

city, town Nanjemoy X vicinity

county Charles

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Trustees

street and number 8705 Gilroy Road telephone 301-743-5353

city, town Nanjemoy state MD zip code 20662-3340

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charles County Courthouse tax map and parcel: 51 p. 98

city, town La Plata liber 329 folio 253

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- ☐ Contributing Resource in National Register District
- ☐ Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- ☐ Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- ☐ Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- ☐ Recorded by HABS/HAER
- ☐ Historic Structure Report or Research Report
- ☐ Other

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function	Resource Count
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	Contributing Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> 3 buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	
		<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	
		<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
		<input type="checkbox"/> social	
		<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
		<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	
		<input type="checkbox"/> unknown	
		<input type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	
		<input type="checkbox"/> other:	
			Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory
			0

7. Description

Inventory No. CH-776

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

The Mount Hope Baptist Church includes a 1941 brick veneer chapel standing on or near the site of at least one earlier church building and a circa 1868 log schoolhouse. An altered stucco covered with vinyl schoolhouse, and a large African American cemetery also share the site which is located in the western section of Charles County near the intersection of Gilroy and Bowie Roads. The church building is located on the west side of Gilroy Road while the cemetery stands to the east. A circa 1930's wood frame one-story front-gable building stands adjacent to the current church.

The current church, built in 1941, faces east and has a wood frame. The original wood weatherboard siding was replaced around 1968 when a brick veneer was added to the principal elevations and an addition was erected at the south end. The church is typical of rural chapels in Charles County including a front-gable structure with a steeply pitched roof adorned with lancet windows and doors and a prominent steeple on the front elevation. Like many other examples, the square steeple with a pyramidal roof includes a bell tower and serves as a principal entrance and foyer. The steeple reveals the original metal seam roof, while the remainder of the roof is covered in composition shingles. The church, which is five bays in length, includes 5-light lancet windows and a rear doorway on the north side, and three exposed lancet windows on the elevation partially obscured by the addition. A rear chimney pierces the roof. The entire building includes decorative exposed rafters.

The cemetery includes a wide sampling of African-American grave traditions including the presence of unmarked graves, graves with burial plates, wooden stakes, crosses and painted tablets; hand-painted cement tablets, cement tablets molded into unique shapes, and one of the most common elements found in African-American cemeteries in Charles County, cement crosses. Graves generally face east and are adorned with hearty plantings such as yucca, azalea and hosta. Many burial mounts are adorned with artificial flowers and outlined with garden fencing and an overlayment of cement, gravel or flowers. The cemetery has an informal arrangement with graves generally facing east and grouped by family.

The largest and most substantial monument is a memorial stone in the form of an obelisk erected for Rev. R.B. Ward. According to the stone erected by the Potomac and Rappahanock Baptist Association, his widow and the Oak Grove, Mt. Hope, Zion Baptist and Pleasant Grove churches, Ward was born in Richmond, VA Nov 6, 1848, died Sept 21, 1920, age 74. The cemetery also includes the grave of USCT veteran Charles Henry Brown. Some of the most unique handmade stones in Charles County are found at this site including an elaborate stone-encrusted cement cross with an inlay cross in the center.

The school is a stucco building covered with vinyl siding with a side-gable orientation and an inset double-doorway on the south end. The building is believed to have been built with funding from the Julius Rosenwald Fund and is consistent with architectural specifications published by the Fund. The fenestration is believed to have been significantly altered from its original plans. The interiors were not available at the time of the survey.

8. Significance

Inventory No. CH-776

Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religion	
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science	
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history	
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime industry	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation	
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	

Specific dates 1867-1941

Architect/Builder unknown

Construction dates 1867-1941

Evaluation for:

☐ National Register

☐ Maryland Register

☒ not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance reports, complete evaluation on a DOE Form - see manual.)

Mount Hope Baptist Church is the site of the oldest African American Baptist congregations in Charles County. Established in 1867 by Rev. A. A. Watts, it was the founding church for three other African American Baptist communities including Oak Grove in Nanjemoy/Grayton (1883), Pleasant Grove in Marbury/Chicamuxen (1907), and Little Zion in Hilltop (1880), all located in western Charles County. Although the church is not as architecturally significant as other early 20th century African American churches, as the mother of African American Baptist congregations in Charles County the site reflects the emergence of African-American communities after the Civil War and the importance of churches and schoolhouses in that evolution. Finally adding to the sites significance, the site may contain one of the few remaining examples of Rosenwald Schools to survive in Charles County.

All four of the earliest African American Baptist churches in Charles County were clustered in the western section of Charles County and were likely influenced by the strong emphasis on missionary work at the Nanjemoy Baptist Church, which had been active in the region since the 1820's. According to church history of Nanjemoy Baptist, Mount Hope was established on July 4, 1867, the year in which 27 members, presumably former slaves and free blacks, were removed from the nearby white Nanjemoy Baptist Church. On October 27th 1868, Mount Hope Baptist Church was constituted with a membership of fifty nine. (1)

Although the earliest history of the site is not completely understood, it is likely that Mount Hope was the home of one of the first six log schoolhouses erected in black communities in the years immediately following the Civil War. One month after that church was constituted, in November 1868 a schoolhouse lot is believed to have been established nearby when Richard Posey deeded to Dr. W.R. Wilmer and Ragan Deakins [white], as well as Joseph Posey, Anthony Carroll and James Dent, colored, one acre of land for the use and benefit of the colored people of Nanjemoy upon which to erect a schoolhouse. Presumably the schoolhouse was used as a meetinghouse for religious ceremonies before a chapel was erected. Mount Hope was one of six log schoolhouses erected in Charles County by 1868. Others were located in Chicamuxen, Patuxent City, Hughesville, Pomonkey and Malcolm.

In 1872 Richard K. Posey sold an additional one acre to the trustees of the Baptist church including Jesse Thompson, John Butler and Ralph Ward. The church was described in the deed as being the first colored Baptist church in Charles County and lying parallel to the schoolhouse called Bethel. (GAH 3/399) In 1895, Berry G. Posey and Clara Posey, his wife deeded three more acres to Joseph Posey, John Jennifer, and Anthony Carroll, trustees of the Mount Hope Baptist Church. The lot was adjacent to the existing church building. A third parcel was deeded to the church trustees in 1974 consisting of .15 acres east of the road adjacent to church property.

A Baptist church is identified at this site on maps beginning by 1898 where Martinet's Map of Maryland places a church on the east side of the main road, near the current cemetery site. A 1913 United States Geological Survey Map identifies the site as Marshope Church located in its current position on the right west side of Gilroy Road and a schoolhouse at the fork of Gilroy and Bowie Roads.

Maryland Historical Trust

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Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties For

Name Mount Hope Baptist Church

Continuation Sheet

Number 8 Page 1

The Mount Hope Baptist Church was the anchor of the Nanjemoy community and the home church for a number of prominent citizens that together reflect the rich African American experience in the years prior to, during, and after the Civil War. The cemetery holds the grave of Charles Henry Lawson, who served in the United States Colored Troops, First Regiment of Colored Volunteers, DC. The church is also associated through oral tradition with the family of Matthew Henson, who accompanied Admiral Robert E. Perry to his expedition to the North Pole in 1909. Mount Hope is believed to be the final resting place for his mother.

The existing schoolhouse is believed to have been a three-room school funded at least in part, through the Julius Rosenwald Fund. Chicago philanthropist, and president of Sears, Roebuck and Co., Julius Rosenwald established a fund that provided architectural plans and matching grants to more than 5300 African-American schools in the south ranging from Maryland to Texas. In 1919, Joseph Christopher Parks was hired as the first superintendent of colored schools and began expanding and improving the quality of education available to African American children. Parks oversaw the establishment of at least eleven schools with the assistance of the Rosenwald Fund. These included La Plata, Marbury, Mason Springs, Mount Hope, Oak Grove, Bel Alton High School, Tompkinsville, Waldorf, Middletown, Benedict and Malcolm. Other schools often associated with the Rosenwald Fund include Federal Hill (1927), at the Charles/St. Mary's County border near New Market, Pomfret Colored School CH-100, The Rosenwald Fund Program ended in 1932. Of these, Benedict (one-room), Bel Alton (7-room high school) and Mount Hope (3-room) are the only known examples to survive.

Endnotes

"Nanjemoy Baptist Church: Two Centuries for Christ 1793-1993". Published for the 20th anniversary celebration. By Betty M. Willett.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Inventory No. CH-776

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 7.8

Acreage of historical setting 7.8

Quadrangle name Nanjemoy

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is associated with Charles County Tax Map 51, Parcel 98.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cathy Hardy/Historic Sites Survey

organization Charles County Planning

date 12/2/2003

street and number 200 Baltimore Street

telephone 301-396-5815

city or town La Plata

state MD zip code 20646

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
DHCD/DHCP
100 Community Place
Crownsville MD 21032
410-514-7600

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Inventory No. CH-776

Section 8 Page 1

Mt. Hope Baptist Church
name of property
Charles County, MD
county and state

Chain of Title:

A

1872

Richard K. Posey to Jesse Thompson, John Butler, Ralph Ward, trustees of the Baptist Church being the first colored baptist church in charles county, parallel with the schoolhouse called Bethel. One acre.
GAH 3/399

B

1895

Berry G. Posey and Clara Posey, wife to Joseph Posey, John Jennifer and Anthony Carroll, trustees Mount Hope Baptist Church, three acres.
/518

C

1974

Nina Mc Coy to Trustees .15 acres east of road adjacent to church property.
329/253

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 Page 1

Inventory No. CH-776

Mount Hope Baptist Church and Cemetery
name of property
Charles County, MD
county and state

Major Bibliographic References:

Brown, Jack D., et al. *Charles County, Maryland, A History*.
Charles County Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Charles County Land Records, Charles County Courthouse, LaPlata, Maryland.

Charles County Retired Teachers Association. *A Legacy: One and Two-Room Schools in Charles County 1984*.

"Charles County, Maryland Tombstone Inscriptions and Name Index." Charles County Historical Society. Southern Maryland Studies Center, College of Southern Maryland

Hardy, Cathy Currey. "Phase III Final Report Charles County Historic Sites Survey."
Charles County Planning. July 2002.

KCI Technologies, Inc. *Draft--Historic Context For the U.S. 301 Southern Corridor Transportation Study*. August 1996.

Klapthor, Margaret Brown. *The History of Charles County, Maryland*.
LaPlata, MD: Charles County Tercentenary, Inc., 1958.

Little, M. Ruth. *Sticks and Stones: Three Centuries of North Carolina Grave Markers*.
University of North Carolina. Chapel Hill. 1998.

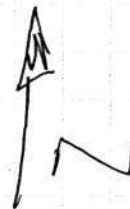
National Trust for Historic Preservation. Website.
<http://www.rosenwaldschools.org/history.html>

Maps

Griffith, Dennis. *Map of the State of Maryland Laid down from an actual Survey of all the principal Waters, public Roads, and Divisions of the Counties therein....* Philadelphia, PA: J. Tallance, Engraver, June 6, 1795.

Martenet, Simon J. *Martenet's Map of Maryland and the District of Columbia*. Baltimore, MD: Simon J. Martenet, C.E., 1865; revised 1885.

GILROY RD



CHURCH
FRAME
STRUCTURE

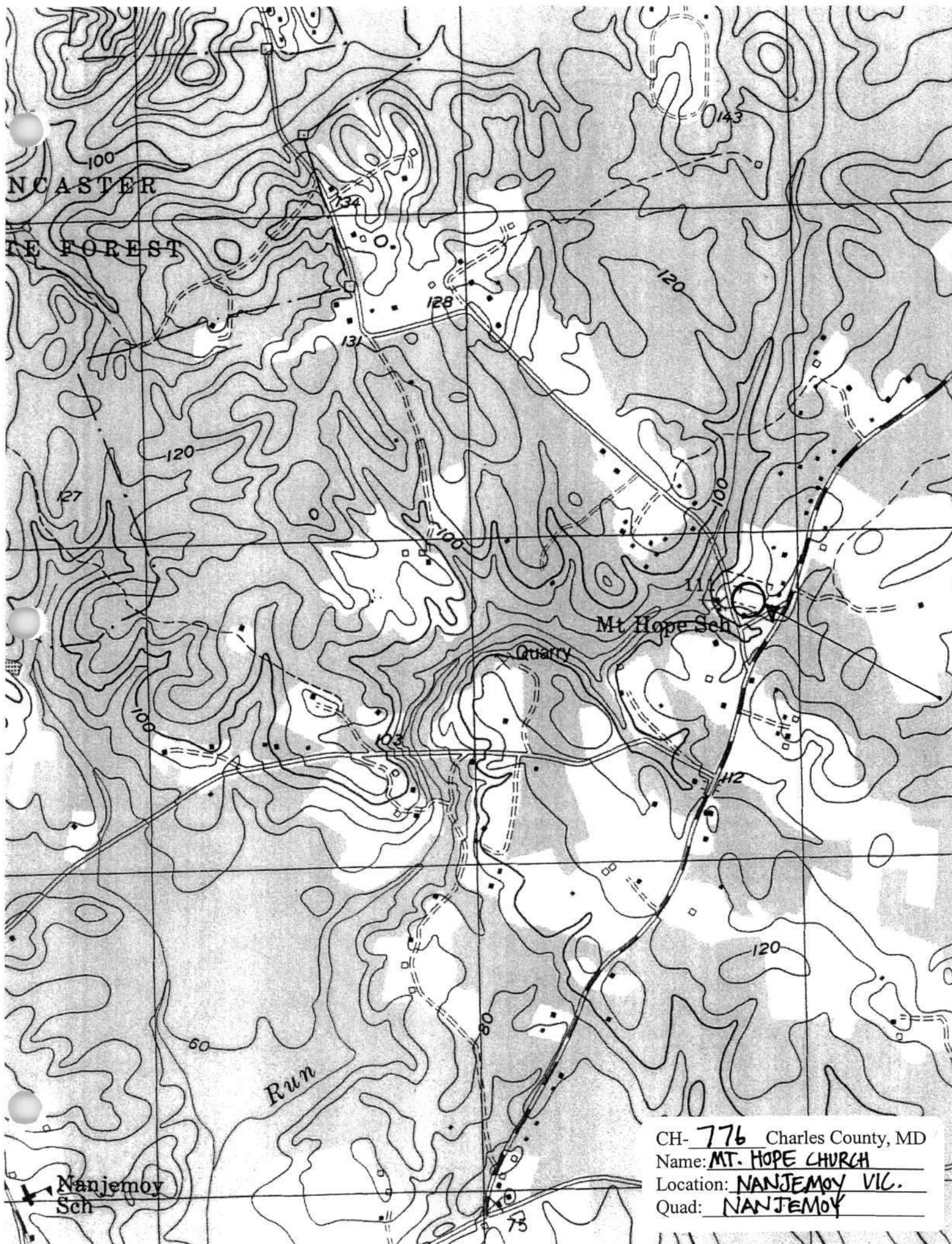
SCHOOL

CEMETERY
FACING EAST

FORMER ROAD

BOWIE RD.

CH-776
MT. HOPE CHURCH
NANJEMOY VIC.
NANJEMOY QUAD



CH- 776 Charles County, MD
Name: MT. HOPE CHURCH
Location: NANJEMOY VIC.
Quad: NANJEMOY



WATERS

FRAZER FARM

BORN

08-07-1914

DEPARTED

12-22-1964

CH 776

MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

CHARLES CO, MD

10/2003

C. HARDY

MD 8440

Looking SW

1076



CH-776

MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CH.

CHARLES CO, MD

10/2003

C. HARDY

MD SHPO

LOOKING W

2 of 6



CH 776

MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

CHARLES W, MD

10/2003

C. HARDY

MD SHPO

LOOKINGSW, CEMETERY

~~28~~ 3 OF 6



CH-776

MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CH.

CHARLES CO, MD

10/2003

C. HARPY

MD SHPO

CROSS, LOOKING W

40FL



CH-776
MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH
CHARLES CO, MD
10/2003
C. HARDY
MD SHPO
MONUMENT, LOOKING NW
50FB



CH- 776
MOUNT HOPE BAPTIST CH.
CHARLES CO, MD

10/2003

C. HARDY
MD SHPO

SCHOOL LOOKING N

60FB